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AUTHOR Sewall, Angela Maynard; Smith, Tom E. C.
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ABSTRACT

The administration of educational programs has become a profession, requiring specific training and a variety of experiences for individuals to serve effectively in the role of educational administrator. For the most part, individuals think of school administration as it pertains to grades P-12; however, higher education administration is very similar to P-12 administration. Many of the job responsibilities performed by P-12 administrators are also performed by administrators in higher education settings. These include budgeting, curriculum issues, personnel issues, and faculty governance. There are, of course, some differences. Dealing with parents is rarely a problem in higher education, while working with state agencies is more of a concern for P-12 administrators. Despite similarities and differences, however, the major differences in the roles of P-12 and higher education administrators is how the roles are carried out. While some school systems have moved to site-based management, the degree of autonomy held by P-12 faculty members does not come close to the autonomy exercised by higher education faculty. (DFR)

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ADMINISTRATION IN P-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATION: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

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A Presentation to MSERA
by
Angela Maynard Sewall, Ed.D.
and
Tom E.C. Smith, Ed.D.
University of Arkansas at Little Rock

T. Smith

Over the past several decades, the administration of educational programs has become a profession. Specific training and a wide variety of experiences are needed for individuals to serve effectively in the role of educational administration. Administering educational programs occurs at several different levels, including elementary, middle, secondary, and higher education. When individuals discuss school administration, for the most part they are referring to administration in grades P-12. However, in many ways, higher education administration is very similar to P-12 administration.

Many of the job responsibilities performed by P-12 administrators are also performed by administrators in higher education settings. These include:

- budgeting
- curriculum issues
- personnel issues
- faculty governance

While there are many similarities between the roles of P-12 administration and higher education administration, there are also some differences. For example, while P-12 administrators have to deal with parents, this is rarely a concern in higher education. P-12 administrators also have to deal with state agencies, primarily the state department of education, more than higher education administrators.

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There are differences in the roles of P-12 and higher education administrators. However, the major differences between successful administration at these two levels is how the roles are carried out. For example, dealing with faculty governance and personnel issues is very different. While some school systems have moved to site based management, the degree of autonomy held by P-12 faculty members does not come close to the autonomy exercised by higher education faculty. So, while there are similarities in administrator roles and in administering P-12 and higher education programs, there are also significant differences.

James Crook has made the apt statement that "a man who wants to lead the orchestra must turn his back on the crowd." No where is this more appropriate than in the role and leadership responsibilities of an academic dean in higher education. Truly the tasks in educational administration, particularly in a public venue are bounded by the concerns of citizens who have a direct and constant policy making involvement in the educational enterprise. In P-12 education, this is the school board. In higher education, this citizens group is the board of visitors or the board of trustees. In all educational endeavors, leadership demands that social and cultural forces in the external environment be factored into actions taken and decisions made. In all educational endeavors, the internal culture must also be understood if the leader if to p rsist in the leadership role and to succeed in moving the institution toward academic excellence.

In educational, as in other enterprises, one may define organizational control as the power and ability to cause others to do what the leader wishes in spite of resistance. On the other hand, authority is defined as the probability that certain specific directives given will be obeyed by those who work with and for the leader. In a real sense, one can only base authority in schools and in higher education upon voluntary compliance. Rarely are commands given such that failure to comply will be construed and insubordination and therefore bring an immediate recommendation for termination of employment. Within the frame of academic freedom, it is truly rare that the follower suspends his or her own criteria

for decision making and simply accepts organizational commands unless legal precedent or statute backs them. This is clearly not the case in private business, and is much less the case in P-12 education than higher education.

Students of educational and organizational theory will immediately recognize the types of power and authority that are commonly touted in theory. Among these are charismatic authority, traditional authority or status, legal authority, formal authority, functional authority and informal authority. All of these different types of power are found at both P-12 and higher education levels. The real secret to authority, however, is not the type of authority but the loyalty of the follower or subordinate.

The sources of power lie in coercion, reward, reference to one more powerful, expertise and the legitimacy of the role held by the leader. In the private sector more of the frames of authority and power seem to fit the role and impact of the leader. There also appears to be more power in P-12 administrators than higher education administrators. Informal power and authority are also present in both P-12 and higher education settings and are equally important at both levels.

In education, P-12 principals and superintendents seems to enjoy all aspects of power and authority as defined earlier and, in fact, teachers often feel that they are in a subordinate role predicated on position, status, and remuneration if not on competency. In higher education, the role of leadership leaves the leader with little by way of power. When dealing with faculty who have tenure, there is little by way of coercive approaches which may be used even in time of crisis. Although this is a respectful and mature approach to leading, the possibility of coercion, albeit never employed, gives some added ability to the leader to cause things to occur which may not be tasteful but which are necessary. This is significantly more difficult in higher education settings than P-12 settings.

The essence of leadership in higher education, particularly at the level of middle management, the department chairperson and Deanship, is leader vision, authenticity,

accountability, expert power and, if available, personal or charismatic authority. In other words, one might be able to work within the context of P-12 education or private enterprise absent charisma or even authenticity. However, the governance and culture of higher education most likely preclude success without these characteristics. Whereas the P-12 educator may, although it is not recommended, lead via dictum and reference to law and policy, the higher educator may seldom use such strategies and can reference lay and policy for informational purposes only.

Perhaps Dale Andersen of the University of Nevada at Las Vegas said it best when he noted "the Dean (higher educational administrator) must be as adroit as a Phil Jackson, in analyzing and responding to the Dennis Rodman's and Michael Jordan's of the academic world. The bulk of his time (must be) spent in assessment, diagnosis, translation, motivations, placation, exhortation and stimulation of his (faculty)."